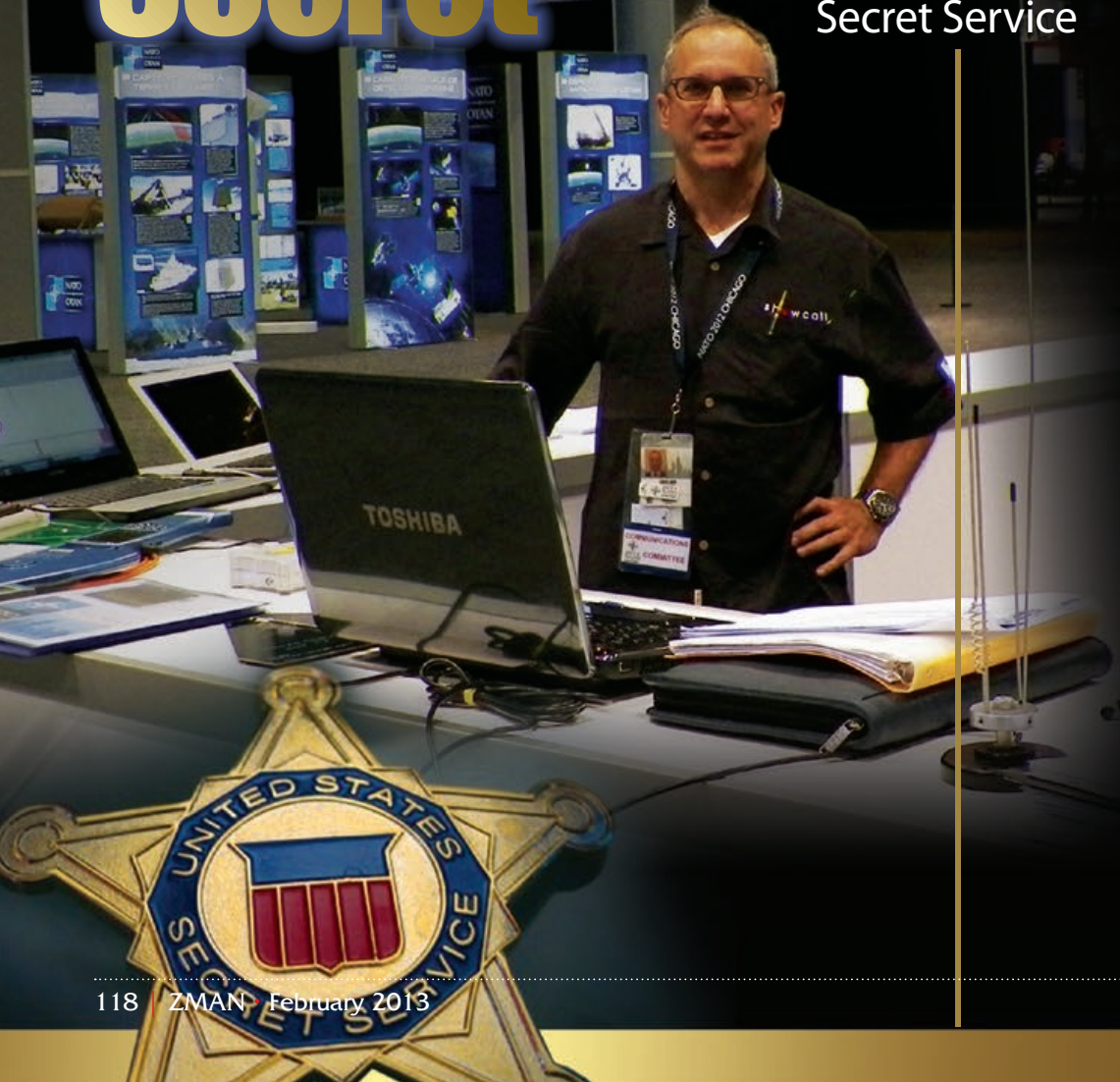


# The Secret Service's Best Kept Secret

The Story behind Elly Libin: The Yarmulke-Wearing Gentleman Who Runs Special Communications Security for the Secret Service



By Turx

Elly Libin tugged at his NATO cap with both hands, pulling it down over his forehead as low as possible. The last thing he needed was for one of the protestors to notice his *yarmulke* sticking out.

What should have been an ordinary stroll on his way to work had turned into one of the most terrifying journeys of his life. His walk to Chicago's McCormick Place for the 2012 NATO summit had turned into a nightmare. There he was, approaching the site, when he saw a mob straight ahead of him. And suddenly, very quickly, he was surrounded by a sea of angry protestors. And the scene became worse. Thousands were being pushed back, hundreds were being detained, but thousands more kept surging forward. Over a third of the Chicago police force, he later found out, plus thousands of troopers from other districts, had been called to hold the line.

Every step brought Elly new fears. The Occupy protestors hated him because of his affiliations with the government. The anti-war protestors hated him for his involvement with NATO. The Neo-Nazi protestors hated him for being Jewish.

Elly took a deep breath and kept walking.

He couldn't let the fear get to him. Beyond his personal safety, and despite the protesting mobs, he dared not be late for work. After all, he was one of the people in charge of communications and security for the 62 world leaders and 2,000 reporters

present at the summit.

After what seemed like an interminable amount of time, he had finally reached the outer layer of security, past the perimeter. He exhaled a long sigh of relief.

He stepped inside the safety of the convention center, but now the hard work was just beginning. Dealing with the security concerns covering thousands of people from all over the world, each speaking his own language, was challenging at best and nightmarish at worst.

For Elly it had so far been the most frightful and exhausting day of his life—and it was far from over. There would still be many more challenges over the next few days that would test his mettle, dexterity and ingenuity.

## The Man Senators Don't Want to Mess With

Very few people do what Elly Libin does for a living. In fact, he is currently the only man in the world to hold this post.

As the wireless coordinator for the Secret Service and other government agencies, Elly has one of the most complicated jobs in the country. If that alone wasn't difficult enough, his job takes him to the tensest of venues and puts him under the highest of scrutiny. It takes him from NATO summits to the G8 assemblies; from the US Open to the World Series; from the president's inauguration

to his State of the Union address. In fact, he's worked together with every president since George H. W. Bush. Additionally, he's worked with and helped keep safe all of the presidential hopefuls since that time.

My first introduction to Elly Libin took place last August in the lounge of the Governors' Association Suite during the first night of the Republican National Convention in Tampa. I had not come to interview him, nor did I have any idea who he was. Our introduction to each other was unremarkable. We shook hands, smiled and went our own ways.

Nevertheless, as the evening progressed and I observed him, I started connecting the dots as to who this man really was. Perhaps the most telling clue was when I heard a longtime Republican activist point out Elly to a US Senator who was scheduled to speak the following evening, and exclaim half-jokingly, "You see that man? He has the power to turn off your microphone when you take to the stage tomorrow. Be nice to him because he's the one making sure you're safe right now."

I glanced in Elly's direction. Could it be true? Could this quiet, reserved man in plainclothes, barely five-foot-eight, be one of the men in charge of security for the entire convention?

I immediately arranged an interview with him through a contact. Elly agreed to meet.

## From Brooklyn to the White House and Beyond

As I found out, Elly's job not only put him in charge of security for the entire convention, but provided him the authority to give direct orders to the Secret Service. How did this shy, gentle man from New York land a job with the Secret Service? Who is Elly Libin?

"I was born in Brooklyn in 1958 but moved to Cedarhurst as a young child," Elly begins quite humbly. "One thing that always had me interested was electronics. When I went to school I majored in physics and electrical engineering at Pratt Institute and MIT.

"While in engineering school, I was



Malcolm Hoenlein, vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, with Elly Libin, wireless coordinator for the Secret Service and other government agencies.

recruited by ABC as a broadcast technician. It was a very interesting opportunity because they had me flying all over the world even though it was only a summer job. So I thought that might be a good field to go into. But then I finished school and got my first job working in the field of wireless technology for a company called Loral as an electronics warfare engineer. I was working on developing new technologies and improving radar warning receivers for F-15s. I loved that job, especially because many of the aircraft I was working on were being built for Israel through the United States. One of the things I designed for them warned their aircraft when they were being targeted by enemy radar. I felt good being in a position to directly help protect Jews in Israel."

"Why did you leave ABC in the first place?" I ask cautiously.

"One day, the head of ABC approached me and when he noticed my *yarmulke* he said, 'There really is no place in broadcasting for someone with a *yarmulke*.' What he meant was that it's a 24/7 job and you're always on call. In fact, he was Jewish and had religious family members, so he knew a little about Judaism. He was trying to be honest and didn't even realize how offensive that had come across. In any case, his words reverberated with me and that's how I got



Elly Libin managing the communication security at the NATO summit in Chicago's McCormick Place.

